

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 31 1979

DATE ENTERED NOV 6 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Tubbs Cordage Company Office Building

AND/OR COMMON

Tubbs Cordage Company Office Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER Hyde Street Pier (San Francisco Historic Ships)

Hyde and Jefferson Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

Fifth

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

California

06

San Francisco

075

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

## OWNERSHIP

## STATUS

## PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

☒ PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

☒ MUSEUM☒ BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

☒ UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

STATE

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

California 94102

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Property Division, National Park Service, WRO

STREET &amp; NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

STATE

San Francisco

California 94102

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Not applicable

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>1963</u>

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Tubbs Cordage Company Office is a small, single-story, single-room office building (with the addition, after the historic period, of a small closet with a sink and toilet). The exterior is painted a dark brownish-red, common on industrial buildings in the last century, and sometimes referred to as "mineral" red or "iron" red, with white trim. This was the color scheme of the office at the time of its move to Hyde Street Pier. The structure stands by itself at the pier, just as it did on the original site. Rectangular in shape, the building dimensions are 21 by 26 feet.

There is a basement, and the structure rests upon redwood sills. One story high, the construction is frame with redwood siding. The siding is shiplapped. The roof is a low hip roof with wood shingles. A single brick chimney and two metal ventilation pipes pierce the roof. The eaves of the structure form a plain boxed cornice with a plain frieze.

The main entrance is located on center in the west wall; the door is not original and has a molded trim and hood with brackets. On entry one mounts a straight double ground step with an open railing.

There is another, secondary door on the south wall. It is identical to the doorway on the west wall but lacks a stair. Here too, the actual door is not original. During the restoration of the building, the State of California added doors with glass panes to allow public visual access. This was the only change.

There are four windows with molded trim and decorated lintels. The windows are capped by hoods with brackets. The brackets are decorated with incised scrollwork and painted white. All sash are wood, double hung, four over four.

The interior floor and counters were added by the State of California during the restoration.

The Tubbs Cordage Company Office was located historically at the company's San Francisco factory at 611-613 Front Street, but when the factory was closed as the company moved out of San Francisco, the little building was moved for preservation to the Maritime State Historic Park and placed on the Hyde Street Pier for continued use as an office, in the vicinity of buildings of similar vintage such as the Hazlett Warehouse (on the National Register) and Ghirardelli Square, and near historic ships such as the S. S. Wapama, C. A. Thayer, Alma, and the ferryboat Eureka (all on the National Register), some of which may feature Tubbs Company rope in their rigging.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES      circa 1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Tubbs Cordage Company

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tubbs Cordage Company Office is of local historical significance in the category of industry due to its association with the Tubbs Cordage Company and its rope factory in San Francisco where the first commercial manufacture of rope on the Pacific Coast was accomplished. It is of local architectural significance as an example of Victorian industrial/commercial architecture. The building represents San Francisco's last link with an early and important commercial maritime establishment, and possesses both associative and architectural values which merit recognition by the National Register of Historic Places. Although no longer located on its original site, as the firm which built the structure closed down its San Francisco factory and it was moved for purposes of preservation, it is now located at the waterfront on the Hyde Street Pier in a 19th century maritime ambience that provides an appropriate environment for its preservation.

### History:

The Tubbs Cordage Company was founded in San Francisco during the Gold Rush in 1849 by Alfred Tubbs as the firm of Folger and Tubbs. Tubbs' partner was a Captain Folger, who aided young Tubbs in their small ships chandlery store. As business increased, the firm expanded, as did Alfred Tubbs' fortune. Convinced he could make money on his own, Alfred invited his brother Hiram, who lived in the east, to come out to California and go into business with him. In 1853, Alfred and Hiram Tubbs bought out Captain Folger and established the firm of Tubbs and Company.

As a part of their ships chandlery business, the Tubbs brothers sold a great deal of rope. Realizing the potential for rope manufacture on the west coast, the brothers dedicated their total energy and assets towards the establishment of a San Francisco-based cordage company.

Opening a rope walk in San Francisco's Potrero District, at 611 Front Street, the Tubbs produced their first rope on July 23, 1856. This was the first rope ever manufactured commercially west of New England.

Between the years 1856 and 1880, the company expanded greatly. Organizing themselves as the San Francisco Cordage Company in 1862, the Tubbs brothers saw their business grow and their fortunes increase. The Tubbs brothers held for many years a near-monopoly on the manufacture of rope on the west coast.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Harry Dring, Hyde Street Pier, by James P. Delgado, September 27, 1978.  
Interview with Karl Kortum, San Francisco Maritime Museum, by James P. Delgado, October 2, 1978.  
Ryder, David W.; Men of Rope: Being the History of the Tubbs Cordage Company . . .,  
San Francisco: Historic Publications, 1954.  
"Tubbs Cordage Company Office Building" files at Hyde Street Pier.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .0125

UTM REFERENCES

A 110 551-090 41184660  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C

B  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Verbal boundary description is not applicable as the nominated structure contains an area of 21 by 26 feet and is significant in its entirety, the U.T.M. coordinates mark its approximate present location.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James P. Delgado, Historian, Western Region

Gordon S. Chappell, Regional Historian, Western Region

ORGANIZATION

DATE

National Park Service, Western Region

October 6, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

415-556-4165

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

San Francisco

California 94102

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ☒

NO ☐

NONE ☐

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Asst. Dir., Cultural Resources

DATE

7/16/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11-6-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11-6-79

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In the late 1880s, the firm had reached substantial levels of production. It was around this time that the present Tubbs Cordage Company Office Building was built, perhaps just after 1889, when the Tubbs brothers changed the name of their firm to the Tubbs Cordage Company.

A visitor to the Tubbs ropewalk during this time has left a detailed description of the manufacturing process:

In the process of manufacture, the hemp is first opened and the fiber straightened out. It then has the appearance of wavy blonde hair of indefinite length. It is afterwards lubricated with coarse whale or petroleum oil (three pounds of oil being required for each bale), for the purpose of making it run smoothly through the machinery. The hemp is then run through a series of large spreaders, which draw out and straighten the fiber, by means of revolving teeth, until it is in a condition to be spun into rope yarn. The advantage in the use of spreaders is that the hemp can be worked at full length without injury to the fiber. This could not be done until the introduction of the spreading machine, an invention patented by John Good, of Brooklyn, New York, and for the use of which Tubbs & Co. have purchased the exclusive right on the Pacific Coast. After passing through the large spreaders into smaller ones, and again through drawing frames, the fiber is ready for the spinning jennies, of which there are about 170 at the Company's works. The yarn is run from the jennies on to bobbins and thence to the ropemaking machines in the ropewalk. The threads are united in tightly twisted strands, several of which are joined to make small ropes, and several of the smaller ropes to make one of large size. The largest size made is 14 inches in circumference. After some further manipulation the rope is rolled on a spindle into coils, and the process of manufacture is completed. At the tarring house, where ropes are tarred for shipping and other use, the yarn is run through a trough of tar which is kept boiling by coils of steam pipe, placed underneath. The boiling tar thoroughly saturates the threads, which are drawn through a compressor, and squeezed by weights, which regulate the quantity of tar to be left in the yarn. Tarred rope has the advantage of offering the greatest resistance to the action of air and water.

During the 1890s, rope manufacturing firms on the west coast and in Manila were consolidated under the Tubbs name. Even the deaths of Alfred and Hiram Tubbs in 1896 and 1897 did nothing to stop the forward momentum of the company. By World War II, the Tubbs Cordage Company was clearly holding its place as the major cordage concern in the western United States.

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By 1963, the firm had outgrown her former location in San Francisco. The time for a move was clearly at hand, and accordingly, the Tubbs Company closed its San Francisco factory. It was at this time that the old office building was offered to the State of California for the Hyde Street Pier, at the Maritime State Historical Park. The building was moved to the pier and some restoration work was done to repair some of the damaged exterior and to rebuild the interior.

In 1976, the Maritime State Historic Park was transferred to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area by the State of California and is presently a unit of the National Park Service. The Tubbs Cordage Company Office building is a major exhibit at the pier and will continue in that capacity for years to come.